

WASHINGTON, D.C. Although his effort to pay for increased Iraqi funding without adding to a projected record federal budget deficit was rejected, U.S. Representative Sanford Bishop voted for a \$88.6 billion supplemental appropriations bill for military and reconstruction operations in Iraq when the measure was taken up Thursday (10/9) by the House Appropriations Committee.

The committee favorably reported the measure for consideration on the House floor, which may come within a week.

Representative Bishop, a member of the panel, said the version approved by a majority of the members would have to be entirely paid for with borrowed money, and was therefore not the most fiscally responsible alternative. He backed a substitute by Representative David Obey (D-WI), the ranking minority member, that would have paid for the supplemental Iraqi funding by deferring tax cuts for the top 1 percent of the country's income earners, reducing the funding for reconstruction, and maximizing the use of local labor.

Although the Obey substitute was voted down, the Georgia lawmaker said he voted for the original bill, even though it adds to the deficit, because it contains funds urgently needed by U.S. troops deployed in Iraq.

Representative Bishop said he was pleased that the committee shifted funds to cover some needs that were not covered in the President's proposal, including funding to provide armor plating for all U.S. troops. Currently, only 20 percent of the troops are equipped with this protection.

"I strongly support our troops, and I support the funding they need to carry out their mission as effectively and safely as possible," he said. "But the record high deficit the U.S. is facing threatens to wreck any chance for a vigorous economic recovery, and to force critical budget cuts that undermine the security and well being of every American. We gave the committee an opportunity to fund the critical needs of our troops without making the federal fiscal crisis worse, but our proposal was flatly rejected."

He added, "we're asked to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure while we're cutting funding for our own infrastructure at home. We're asked to spend billions to make the Iraqi people more secure, while failing to close dangerous gaps in our own homeland security. We're asked to build schools and hospitals for Iraq, while shortchanging our own critical educational and health care needs. We're asked to provide billions to rebuild the Iraqi economy, while cutting economic development programs at home. There is, in fact, a better alternative."

The Congressman said he would continue to push for provisions to pay for the added Iraqi funding without borrowing more money as the supplemental appropriations bill moves through Congress.